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Roundup



A day of *Discovery* with the Houston Astros

NASA was the guest of honor at the Houston Astros' Aug. 14 game against the Chicago Cubs. The crew of the STS-121 shuttle mission threw out the ceremonial first pitch, astronaut Tracy Caldwell sang the national anthem and the Astros sported the mission's patch on their caps during the game.



Pitcher Roger Clemens shows off the STS-121 bat in a pre-game press conference.

Space Center Roundup

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The shuttle and beyond

NASA begins the transition from the space shuttle to the next generation of space exploration systems that will take humans to the moon, Mars and beyond.

FROM THE *director*

A MESSAGE FROM CENTER DIRECTOR MICHAEL L. COATS



Checks and balances

STS-121 was my first shuttle flight as JSC director. It was an opportunity to participate in and watch the process that positions us for a successful shuttle launch.

The Readiness Review, Launch Minus 2 Day Review and daily Mission Management Team meetings were well structured, highly professional and wide open to discussion and input from everyone. Most importantly, diverse opinions were not only encouraged but mandatory. I was amused when the media chose to characterize diverse opinions as “dissent.” During earlier missions, the same media characterized the apparent lack of dissent and discussion as “monolithic” and “group think.”

A successful space program requires a working environment where we are all free to express dissenting and diverse opinions without fear of repercussions. Gen. George S. Patton phrased it well: “If we are all thinking alike, someone isn’t thinking.” As space professionals we all have a responsibility to speak out as clearly and eloquently as possible, with the data to support our positions. We also have the responsibility to explain our rationale when we make a decision and to support the final decision when the appropriate individual makes it.

The NASA administrator, Mike Griffin, has made it clear that he expects everyone to state their positions clearly and forcefully. He is quite pleased with the “dissenting opinions” he hears at the pre-flight and in-flight reviews, and nobody on the space team should be intimidated by the media attention and occasional criticism that is an important and necessary part of our free society. The checks-and-balance system we use between the programs and the institution, including my center director responsibilities for independent technical authority, is designed to ensure all points of view are heard.

Although it may appear inconsistent, the fact is that in the space business, teamwork is invaluable and dissent is priceless!

Mike

FROM THE SPACE SHUTTLE TO THE ARCHITECTURE BEYOND, JSC IS...

Planning for shuttle retirement

The Vision for Space Exploration promises an exciting new future for NASA.

It outlines a series of challenges that, over the next few decades, will push the agency and the country to the very limits of human ingenuity.

FULL STORY BEGINS ON PAGE 4

